

Brown University

Fall 2009

Sociology 1250

**PERCEPTIONS OF MENTAL ILLNESS**

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Mental illness is a basic part of social life, and afflicts many people. Public attention has always been important in mental illness. State mental health care is one of the costliest items in any state budget. Federal mental health programs beginning in the 1960s have created entirely new forms of treatment and location of care. Most recently, the fate of discharged chronic patients in the community, as well as crimes committed by current patients and ex-patients, have received widespread attention.

Besides these structural issues, mental illness has always played a major role in popular culture and basic human awareness. Mental illness has figured largely in poetry, fiction, drama, art, and music. Many of the perceptions of mental illness form key parts of childhood socialization and adult belief systems. The mad artist, the frightening asylum, the mentally ill relative in the family closet, fear of a halfway house in the neighborhood, the mental patient's terror and desolation -- all these are part of the many perceptions of mental illness.

This course is interdisciplinary, in that it includes material from many fields. But there is a coherent organizing theme: the need to understand mental illness in a broad social context. Too often psychopathology is studied as a discrete entity, with little regard to its social origins and to the institutions of social control involved in mental illness. Such scientific detachment detracts from quality therapeutic care, as well as reinforcing public fears of mental illness. In this course students will explore how mental illness is a very ordinary human possibility that can be creative and/or destructive, and lead to breakdown and/or breakthrough. Precisely the significant attention paid to mental illness by all cultural institutions indicates how central mental illness is to human life. This course will enable students to study both social scientific/intellectual components, and cultural/emotional/expressive aspects of mental illness.

**COURSE ORGANIZATION**

There will be two lectures and one required discussion section each week except the first and last. There will also be time for discussion in lecture meetings. Study questions will be given out ahead of time to help you prepare for the discussion. If you fail to get these, you must get them from a classmate or come to your TA's office to pick up a copy. Section discussions are a required and integral part of the course, and a place for you to examine the course material in depth.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

-Reading and discussing assignments

-Participation in section discussions - If you cannot attend all sections, do not take this course!

-Attendance at films (each will be shown on two consecutive nights)

-Two short papers -- These are based on course readings, lectures, and films, as well as a little outside research:

Oct. 9 Paper #1 "Social Factors in Mental Health" (3-5 pp.)

Nov. 23 Paper #2 "The Experience of Mental Illness" or "Mental Health Policy" (3-5 pp.)

-Midterm exam: Oct. 23

-Final exam: Dec. 17, 2009 2 pm

-If for any reason you cannot be present for the two exams, do not take this course!

In fairness to other students, assignments are due exactly on the day indicated. The syllabus lays this all out for you at the start of the semester, so that you can get organized. Late papers will have a half-grade penalty for each day late. Grades are based on the average of the two exams and two papers, with a weighting for section attendance and participation. Make-up exams are unavailable. Incompletes are unavailable.

## REQUIRED READING

Books to be purchased:

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, The Yellow Wallpaper (Feminist Press)

Kay Jamison, An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness (Knopf)

Allan Horwitz, Creating Mental Illness (Chicago)

Susanna Kaysen, Girl Interrupted (Vintage)

Andrea Tone, The Age of Anxiety: A History of America's Turbulent Affair with Tranquilizers  
(Basic)

William Styron, Darkness Visible (Vintage)

Peter Schaffer, Equus (Penguin)

Tennessee Williams, Four Plays ["Suddenly Last Summer"] (New American Library)

This is the order in which they will be used. It is advisable to purchase all books before midsemester, when they are usually returned to publishers.

The required books are also available at the Reserve Room at the Rockefeller Library.

MyCourses reading – There are a number of required articles on the website, indicated by (W). Additional short readings will be posted during the course.

If you access E-Reserves from Josiah or from the Course Reserves site (OCRA)

<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/reserves/> you need password: FT991. You do not need to use the password if you access E-Reserves from WebCT.

Reading Packet is also required and integral to the course; readings from Reading Packet are indicated by (R). The packet is available at Allegra Printing.

Handouts will be distributed from time to time for reading and discussion. If you fail to attend any class meeting, check with a classmate to see what you missed, and obtain it before the next meeting.

W Sept. 9 1. Introduction

Slide and music presentation: Vincent Van Gogh and Don McLean

F Sept. 11 2. The Experience of Mental Illness

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, The Yellow Wallpaper  
 Sylvia Plath, "Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams" (R)  
 Anonymous, "Labeling Someone Mentally Ill" (R)

M Sept. 14 3. How Narratives, Memoirs, and Film Illuminate the Experience of Mental Illness

Anne Lovell "The City is My Mother: Narratives of Schizophrenia and Homelessness"  
American Anthropologist 1997 99:355-368 (W)  
 William Cockerham "Acting Mentally Disordered: The Example of Schizophrenia, Anxiety,  
 and Depression" Ch. 11 in Sociology of Mental Disorder (R)

W Sept. 16 4. Narratives of Mental Illness (1)

Kay Jamison, An Unquiet Mind

F Sept. 18 Section

M Sept. 21 4. Narratives of Mental Illness (1-continued)

Kay Jamison, An Unquiet Mind

W Sept. 23 5. Sociological Approaches to the Study of Mental Health

Allan Horwitz, Creating Mental Illness Introduction, Chapters 1-2  
*film showing: "King of Hearts"*

F Sept. 25 Section

M Sept. 28 Yom Kippur – no class

W Sept. 30 6. The Medical Model and Labeling Theory

Allan Horwitz, Creating Mental Illness Chapters 3-6  
 Maurice Temerlin, "Suggestion Effects in Psychiatric Diagnoses" (R)  
 David Rosenhan, "On Being Sane in Insane Places" (R)

F Oct. 2 Section

M Oct. 5 7. Social Factors and Epidemiology of Mental Illness

the following chapters in Alan Horwitz and Theresa Scheid, A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health (W):

William Eaton, Carles Muntaner, and Jamie Spag, "Socioeconomic Stratification and Mental Disorder"

David Williams, Manuela Costa and Jacinta Leavell, "Race and Mental Health"

Sarah Rosenfield, "Gender and Mental Health"

W Oct. 7      8. Sociological Factors in Diagnosis

Allan Horwitz, Creating Mental Illness Chapters 7-8, Conclusion

F. Oct. 9      Section

*\*\*Oct. 9 – First paper due*

M Oct. 12      Holiday

W Oct. 14      8. Sociological Factors in Diagnosis (cont'd)

Robin Henig, "Sorry. Your Eating disorder Doesn't Meet Our Criteria" New York Times Nov. 30, 2004 (R)

Elizabeth Cooksey and Phil Brown, "Spinning on its Axes: DSM and the Social Construction of Psychiatric Diagnoses" International Journal of Health Services 1998 28: 525-554 (R)

Peter Conrad and Deborah Potter, "From Hyperactive Children to ADHD Adults: Observations of the Expansion of Medical Categories", Social Problems, 2000 47: 559–582 (W)

F Oct. 16      Section

M Oct. 19      9. Narratives of Mental Illness (2)

Susanna Kaysen, Girl Interrupted

*film showing: "Girl Interrupted"*

W Oct. 21      10. Mental Health Institutions --History and Political Economy

David Rothman, "The Enduring Asylum" (R)

Joseph P. Morrissey, Howard H. Goldman, and Lorraine V. Klerman, "Cycles of Institutional Reform" (R)

Edgar Allan Poe, "The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether"(R)

Anton Chekhov, Ward No. 6 (R)

F Oct. 23      *Midterm Exam*

M Oct. 26 11. Social Structure of the Mental Hospital

Erving Goffman, Asylums (selections) (R)

W Oct. 28 12. Mental Health Policy – Recent Developments

Ronald Manderscheid and Gail Hutchings “Building Comprehensive Community Care Systems” Journal of Mental Health 2004 13:37-41 (W)

Jeffrey Geller, “The Last Half-Century of Psychiatric Services as Reflected in *Psychiatric Services*” Psychiatric Services 2000 51:41-67 (W)

Howard Goldman “‘How Do You Pay Your Rent?’: Social Policies and the President’s Mental Health Commission” Health Affairs 2003 22:65-72 (W)

Ronald W. Manderscheid, Joanne E. Atay, and Raquel A. Crider, “Changing Trends in State Psychiatric Hospital Use From 2002 to 2005” Psychiatric Services 2009 60:29–34 (W)

F Oct. 30 Section

M,W

Nov. 2-4 13. Historical Archeology of Mental Hospitals

Michael Janofsky, “A Withering Little Town Seeks its Salvation in an Old Asylum” New York Times Nov. 25, 1997 (R)

Tracie Rozhon, “A Fight to Preserve Abandoned Asylums” New York Times Nov. 18, 1998 (R)

Alice Giordano, “Homes vs. Headstones” New York Times Nov. 2, 2003 (R)

The State Hospital: In Memoriam – Website: [www.1856.org](http://www.1856.org)

Bloom Project – Website: [www.bloomproject.org](http://www.bloomproject.org)

Abandoned Asylum Website – [www.abandonedasylum.com](http://www.abandonedasylum.com)

*guest speaker: Anna Schuleit, artist* (Nov. 2)

F Nov. 6 Section

M-W

Nov. 9,11 14. Medications and Medicalization

Andrea Tone, The Age of Anxiety: A History of America’s Turbulent Affair with Tranquilizers

F Nov. 13 Section

M Nov. 16 15. Mental Illness and Creativity

Kay Jamison, Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament - Introduction, Ch. 2-3 (R)

W Nov. 18 16. The Art of Mental Patients/“Raw Art”

John McGregor, The Discovery of the Art of the Insane Intro, Ch. 2, 12 (R)

Slide presentations: The art of mental patients

F Nov. 20 Section

M Nov. 23 17. Mental Illness and Art - Van Gogh

Meyer Schapiro, "Van Gogh's 'Crows Over a Wheatfield' " (R)

Mario Varga Llosa, "Light in the Shadows of Arles" New York Times July 31, 2001 (R)

David Chandler, "Van Gogh was a Keen Observer of Starry Nights" Boston Globe Feb. 27, 2001 (R)

*\*\*Second paper due*

W-F

Nov. 25, 27 Thanksgiving Vacation

M Nov. 30 18. Mental Illness in Drama

Tennessee Williams, Suddenly Last Summer (in Four Plays)

Peter Schaffer, Equus

W Dec.2 19. Mental Patients Rights and Advocacy

Judi Chamberlin, On Our Own (excerpts) (R)

Raymond M. Weinstein, "The Mental Hospital from the Patient's Point of View" In Walter R. Gove, ed., Deviance and Mental Illness (R)

F Dec. 4 Section

M Dec. 7 20. Narratives of Mental Illness (3)

William Styron, Darkness Visible

W Dec. 9 21. Summary and Conclusion

*Final Exam Dec. 17, 2pm*